



their own individual genius on the best of the works of those masters that lived prior to the *Zopf* period, they created a new era in musical art with their new forms and ideal conceptions. The number of these heroes, for such they truly are, the re-creators and perfectors of the highest and best in their art, is only six; their names—celebrated throughout the civilised world—Bach, Händel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. No seventh can be justly bracketed with them. The reason for the exclusive position assigned to this half-dozen incomparable men can only be understood, even by the historian, on a close examination of them and their works. What they accomplished in the world of tonal art no earlier or later composer has succeeded in achieving; viz., the opening up of new fields of musical thought and the invention of new forms of musical expression. Each created his own forms, filling them with solid subject-matter unapproached by the work of any other master.

These six great masters were independent workers. This is an important and weighty item to be remembered, as even the greatest of their predecessors were the outcome of schools, or the representatives and chiefs of those schools. The distinguishing characteristic of each of the great six is that they neither belonged to nor founded any positive school. Apart from the fact that two men cannot, in themselves, be said to constitute a school, Bach and Händel can as little be said to represent a Thuringian school as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (ignoring for the present the perpetuation of certain common principles in their instrumental compositions) to represent a Vienna school. But adopting for the moment such a classification, where should Gluck be placed, bearing in mind the totally dissimilar contents of his creations? Certainly he cannot be classed with Bach, and we could not, with any show of reason, affiliate him to the Beethoven group. But even with the other five great masters, sectional division is not possible. Händel had very little acquaintance with Bach, and created his reputation without any influence from that quarter. Admitted, Bach knew more of Händel, but his intimacy with the writings of Kuhnau, Reinken, Buxtehude, Schütz, Frescobaldi, Lotti, Poglietti, not to mention other masters, was of an altogether profounder and closer nature, so that without any study of Händel we may safely aver he would have been still the great Bach. The sons of Johann Sebastian struck out entirely new paths for themselves, a fact which entirely disposes of any notion of

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an exclusive Bach school with its distinctive art-forms, style, and manner of expression. Mozart learnt much from Haydn, but the latter living beyond Mozart learned, in his turn, much from that master's riper works, and thus became the disciple of his own pupil. And although Beethoven, too, learned from Haydn, yet the "first period" of his work bears so unquestionably a Mozart impress, that it is universally referred to as Beethoven's "Mozart" and not "Haydn" period. Nor, in an estimate of this character, should it be forgotten that Mozart and Beethoven, although Catholics, yet studied assiduously the scores of Bach and Händel, leaders of Protestant art, "Bach," indeed, being the constant companion of Beethoven. Further, taking into consideration the great extent to which Händel, Gluck, Haydn, and Mozart were indebted to the Italians, we can no longer hesitate in becoming convinced that the classical masters of the eighteenth century did not develop under the exclusive teachings of any special master or any particular school, but worked out their own individuality, based on the best of the teachings of all schools and absorbing them into their own musical being.

Not even the excellent master Heinrich Schütz can be credited with so universal and intimate acquaintance with contemporary musical theory and practice. That he well-nigh succeeded in fusing the teachings of the two chief schools of his time is indeed remarkable, and singles him out from the crowd of his contemporaries; yet, put in juxtaposition with our six great masters, he cannot be said to have reached their level either in the ideal world or in the creation of new forms, although what he did prepared the way for them in a very glorious manner. To us, each of this noble six is the discoverer of new lands in the world of tonal art, on which but few uncultivated portions remain for their successors to till and fructify. The styles of Bach, Händel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were grounded on the intensest objectivity, whilst that of their great, talented followers is of a subjective nature, united to a more or less interestingly developed musical manner. The great German tone-poets, dating from the beginning of the last century, fall naturally into two divisions, the first of which may fittingly be described as representing "The epoch of German genius," and the second "The epoch of the great talents."

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THE EPOCH OF GENIUS IN GERMAN MUSIC.



BEFORE entering upon the “genius epoch,” a period not important to Germany only, but to the whole civilised world, we must first take a short retrospective survey of the principal cultured historical movements that led up to this bright era of musical genius. In the chapter about Luther, and again when dealing with the labours of Heinrich Schütz and Michael Prætorius, we laid stress on the revival of the “world’s conception” and ideals of the classical epoch and their gradual amalgamation with the strivings of the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth century we have on the one hand the hot champions of the antique, and on the other the enthusiastic partisans of mediæval thought. Yet even then there were those who endeavoured to reconcile the opposing doctrines. Such men were John Reuchlin, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Ulrich von Hutten, and Sir Thomas More. They set themselves to harmonise classical and Christian teachings, and from their labours were evolved those glorious humanitarian principles which could not fail to exert a beneficial effect on the progress of art, and which indeed resulted in the Renaissance in architecture, painting, sculpture, and poetry, represented by Filippo Brunellesco, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Titian, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Ariosto; whilst in religion the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, shines pre-eminent as the mediator between the old and new faith. It was he, too, it will be remembered, who first called forth in the art of music an impulse that finds a somewhat similar parallel in the renaissance of the sister arts. He created a sacred song based on the spirit of the “Volks” melody. This melody formed part

of the being of the people, and therefore his sacred song was intelligible to the masses, and at once achieved success. This was the foundation on which the whole superstructure of Protestant Church-music was raised, an entirely new aspect of art. And to this sacred song was wedded subsequently the contrapuntal art of the Middle Ages. Similarly did the great Italian composers of the sixteenth century seek to fuse the various existing art-styles in a manner not unlike the renaissance workers in the plastic art, and though their treatment was, in a musical sense, stricter, yet it suffered from a one-sidedness. This charge of one-sidedness more particularly refers to the masters of the Roman and old Venetian tone-schools. Thus did Palestrina strive to infuse into the ingenious canon of the Netherlanders a sweet and plaintive Italian melodiousness. We have no doubt that Palestrina was impelled to this from his strong innate sense of euphony, proportion, and beauty, qualities which appear to be the gift of all Italians. He may, too, have been further aided by his acquaintance with the earlier works of the Neapolitan school, wherein it had been attempted to reproduce the Greek lines of beauty. Master Willaert, at Venice, had sought to reconcile closed harmonies with the polyphonic style of earlier times, which by loosening the chords produced that brilliant, full, and diversified colouring which we ever find in the masterpieces of Titian and Veronese, the Venetian painters of the Renaissance.

As we approach the schools of the seventeenth century, we observe that the efforts of masters are no longer directed to a blending of classical and mediæval thought, but to a disuniting of what had been amalgamated, and a development of the principles of each on their own particular lines. Under this special treatment the dramatic style of the Tuscans gradually differed in such essentials from the Church music of Italy that attempts at reconciliation were not possible. The New Venetian school, represented chiefly by Frescobaldi, Legrenzi, and Lotti, busied itself with the development of the canonic modes of the old Netherlanders and Romans, and in so natural and logical a sequence was this carried out that that grand fugal style resulted on which Bach based his marvellous art-creations. Here there was no reconciliation, but a continuation and completion of an element that had existed for more than 500 years. The only feature in the works of these schools, of which it might be asserted that it was the outcome of the impetus music received from the renaissance in the other arts, was the

more frequent and extended use of colouristic means. But extended tone-colouring was a natural proceeding concomitant with the growth of the orchestra. With the Tuscans it might be accounted for by a distinctly pronounced return to classical tradition. It was this effort to resuscitate the antique that gave birth to the Tuscan style, a style which did not, as with the plastic art, absorb into itself the mediæval spirit. Such a renaissance, arising from a conscious or unconscious fusion of classical and mediæval elements, was not possible at that period because of the comparative youth of the tonal art.

It was not until the time when the true German genius for music asserted itself that the welding of the teachings of two opposed art-periods were witnessed. And then all the various existing musical styles were absorbed, and systematised into one concrete whole, in a manner as perfect as the impulse given to the art was potent. The quick succession in which the great masters of the new tonal era followed each other (sometimes they were contemporaries), and the marvellous speed at which the art was propelled forward until even it was in advance of its sister art which had hitherto left it in the rear, were the results of this reconciliation and fusion of the cultures of two worlds. In Germany, especially, where the great tone-poets appeared, the enormous strides made in musical art carried it far beyond the poetry of the fatherland. Indeed, it was owing to the enthusiasm of composers and public for the opera and oratorio, in the first half of the eighteenth century, that the great German poets were incited to the composition of some of the best fatherland epics and dramas. The *Messiah* of Händel was begun and completed in 1741, but Klopstock's epic poem of the same name occupied the author fifteen years, 1728—1743; Gluck's *Alceste* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* were performed 1769 and 1774; whilst Goethe's *Iphigenia*, begun in 1776, was not finished until 1787; and, even comparing Gluck's later *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 1779, the musician would still be some eight years before the poet. Therefore the fusion of the Greek conception of the world with Christian humanitarianism in the German drama ought no longer to be placed to the credit of Goethe, but to that of the musician Gluck.

What we have just stated does not in any way contradict our assertion that music is the youngest of the arts. It rather confirms it; and if we

were to place side by side with it the history of its sister arts, we should see that what it achieved in the eighteenth century was the natural sequel of its youth. For, whilst the other arts constituted an integral part of cultured history, and were thus led to reflection and self-criticism, music, which did not, like poetry and the plastic art, possess its models in life and surrounding nature, was engaged in building up its grammar, in inventing its means and forms, in constructing its language by which it was to appeal to the heart, to speak intelligibly, and to produce independent creations. Centuries of activity were devoted to the exclusive formation of its material. This it was which isolated music from the progressive influence of its sister arts; but notwithstanding its many shortcomings, it enjoyed one great advantage, that when it did step out of its retirement to give utterance to the thoughts of its high priests, it appeared untouched by pernicious influences of any kind. The musician's criticism had not yet been directed to the creation of ethic and æsthetic art-works, but had been restricted to the supplying of means by which such creations could eventually become possible. Even when music, about the second and third generation of the Netherland masters, was capable of expressing itself in its own language in a fairly intelligible and comprehensive manner, it still remained uninfluenced by all cultured historical events, and played no part of any importance in the mental life of the people, except in its relation to the Church. This, indeed, was never severed. Therefore every change in the Church was reflected in the tonal art. Thus the great Protestant movement of Luther exercised much important influence over it, producing those type-forms which have remained till to-day. The tonal art was as a maiden passing her life within the walls of a convent, secluded from the turmoil and excitement of the world, and spending her time in meditation and prayer. In this we have the key why during the prolonged struggle of the disastrous Thirty Years' War, by which the mental being of everything was affected, music remained untouched, and that, too, in Germany, where the war raged the fiercest. German architecture, sculpture, painting, and poetry suffered terribly, just, alas! at that very time when smiling hope pointed to a speedy progress. They were smitten in their vital parts by poisoned arrows carrying death. But music not only escaped, it actually advanced, for it will be remembered that it was during this sad and fearful period that certain German tone-

masters were earnestly labouring to develop a pure music that should speak from the heart.

It was during the second half of the seventeenth, and in a greater degree during the first half of the eighteenth century, that this change was taking place. The continually increasing contact with the mental world, the more perfect blending of classical and Middle Age notions, the invention of the printing-press, the ever-growing well-being of nations, and enlarged commercial relations brought the tonal art into more constant communication with the outside world. For the first time in its history it was beginning to incorporate itself into the mental life of peoples, and form an integral part of it—a state which the sister arts had always intimately enjoyed. Hitherto the art of music had stood afar off, occupied in self-contemplation, untouched by degenerate or hurtful influences. It was as an innocent child, and, true to the poet's words, that the "simplicity of the child instinctively leads it to what the profound thinker is apt to overlook," it absorbed into its own glorious self the various existing art cultures just at that very period when it had attained an independent growth ripe enough and capable of utilising them in its own interest. Thus Germany possessed in the eighteenth century those glorious tone mediators between classical and Christian art-cultures, which, two centuries earlier, Italy similarly enjoyed, in its great architects and sculptors, and England and Spain in the grandest poets of the world. That these great tone-poets were Germans finds its explanation in the fact of the fatherland having remained unaffected and unartificial; and its masters, at that moment, being fresh and unbiassed, were gifted with a power of divination that marked them out as the fittest to realise the splendid epoch of tonal bloom about to burst forth on the world. This transformation was so sudden, and the impetus given to the art so powerful, that German music, for a time at least, shot ahead of German poetry. The efforts, however, of the followers of the heroes Klopstock, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller, occurring two generations before similar imitative strivings on the part of the tone-masters, again brought poetry to the front, with its schools of romanticists and so-called "young Germans," who were opposed by the virtuosi—the defenders of its classicity. The followers of the great masters of music, Bach, Gluck, Händel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, come down to our present time—*i.e.*,

a whole century subsequent to their models—and show themselves either as schooled academicians, spirited eclectics, or gifted romanticists, though form-despising naturalists and mannerists.

The Musical Renaissance dates, then, from the era of the six great composers. With Bach, polyphony reaches its climax. The Leipzig cantor was also the greatest of all the masters who had preceded him in purely instrumental compositions, the only phase of the tonal art which is entirely independent of all extraneous aid, for vocal music demands some connection with the poet. Bach, therefore, must be regarded as the founder of our modern tonal art, for its chief and special feature is its achievements in instrumental music, and its dissociation from the other arts. The grand old master is the central point of collective musical history. He brings to a close the thousand years of working that preceded him, and opens up a new vista of a glorified art. Händel, with his heroic tone-poems, introduced a new art-form, although retaining the old and popular name of oratorio. In his musical epics he embodied old Israelitic, Greek, Roman, and Christian subjects. Indeed, he was the first real tone mediator between ancient and modern, heathen and Christian, culture. Gluck, in resuscitating the Greek drama, infused into it a feature of Christian humanitarianism. In his *Armida* he foreshadowed the romantic era of music. Haydn is the father of the modern symphony and of all chamber music. Instead of a one-theme style, which we find in the instrumental compositions of Bach and Händel, he adopts a thematic dualism. Mozart appears as the Shakespeare of music, and ranges at will betwixt tragic and comic, classical and romantic, vocal and instrumental. It was left to Beethoven to unite in himself the grandest and most skilful mastery of art-form, with the most exalted of styles, and this in a manner which has never been achieved before or since that glorious master's day. Notwithstanding his powerful art-personality, he clearly recognised the boundary beyond which, in obedience to the fixed and eternal laws of art, subjectivity could not go. The work of these six great masters might be said to encircle the whole possible range of music practice. True, they have been succeeded by a number of gifted and original masters, but these have based their work on that of the great six, who not only prepared the ground for them and for us who call ourselves the children of the present, but themselves have boldly and victoriously reached the highest possible elevations.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH.

BACH represents the completion and perfection of Catholic and Christian tonal art development during the Middle Ages and the epoch of the Reformation. And he is more than this: he is the awakener and father of the whole of our modern music. It was his genius which led him to apply the best of the then existing polyphonic art-forms to "absolute" instrumental music, using the form as regards its beauty and perfection of outline, and the polyphony in its contents, in the most complete manner. Nor did he restrict his use of polyphonic art-forms to works for the church instrument—the organ—only, but extensively employed them in his wonderful masterpieces for the harpsichord, the violin, and full orchestra. By this procedure the final, full, and complete impress of liberty was for ever set to the tonal art. It was not till then that music, for the first time in its history, was able to stand boldly forth as a free, independent art, as complete in and by itself as Christian architecture and painting were during the latter part of the Middle Ages and the Cinque Cento. Now could it give utterance, in precise, intelligible tones, to the innermost feelings of the heart. No longer did it require the support of poetry, Biblical or liturgical texts, church services, civic ceremonies, or dramatic representation to assist it in making itself understood. It was supreme in its own realm of independent tone, sole sovereign in its world of instrumental music. From a dependent vassal, Bach elevated it into the proud position of a queen, responsible to herself only. The transferring of art-forms from the vocal to the instrumental field subjected them to entirely new conditions. Here they would be governed by wholly new laws of effect, and worked out by totally different means. Bach was fully aware of these changed conditions, and saw that if the forms were to be of any lasting good, re-modelling was an imperative necessity.

Without re-creation in some shape or other the glorious progress then made by instrumental music was impossible. And here it is pleasing to remember that Bach was not the first who had perceived this compulsory re-casting. Kuhnau, Reinken, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, Frescobaldi, Poglietti, and the two Scarlattis had all experimented in this direction; but none had